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Mr. K's Memoirs? The Debate

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KHRUSHCHEV Remembers, a 639-page, \$10 memoir of that most fascinating of Russians since Stalin died 18 years ago, has created a giant storm among experts on the Soviet Union as to its authenticity and origin.

Some say it is the authentic of Nikita Khrushchev. Some say it is a put-up job by the KGB, the Soviet secret police. One pins most of it on the American Central Intelligence Agency.

The whole truth is impossible to get at and probably even those at Time Inc. who swung the deal to publish the excerpts in Life and elsewhere around the world and then to produce the book, do not know the full story.

Some contend there is essentially nothing new in the book, that Khrushchev or others have said it all before. Others retort that this is nonsense, that there is much new both in substance and in expansion on what had been known.

Here is what is known, and what some of those experts have to say.

Edward Crankshaw, who wrote the book's introduction and footnotes, now says he was "rather dramatically faced" with the "original Russian typescript" of the book "early last spring" and that the transcript "reads like a transcript from tapes" rather than "a finished memoir." He adds that "it is material for a finished memoir -- a memoir which I know Khrushchev to have been working on for at least three or four years."

Crankshaw, a leading British authority on Russia, apparently is the only person outside those at Time Inc. who handled the deal to see the Russian transcript other than Strobe Talbott, a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, who did the translation. Talbott wrote that "the original material, when it came into my hands, was quite disorganized." He took "certain liberties with the structure," he said, but "except for an occasional paraphrase or improvised transitional sentence, Khrushchev has said everything attributed to him in this book."

The publishers (Little, Brown & Co., a Time Inc. subsidiary) say in a "note" in the book that it is "made up of material emanating from various sources at various times and in various circumstances."

Goes On

It has been established that two Time Inc. representatives, Murray Gart and Jerrold Schecter, met last August in a Copenhagen hotel with Victor Louis, a man generally assumed to be a KGB agent who is widely known to Western newsmen and who has written (for The Washington Post among others) some rather startling articles from Moscow and elsewhere. He gave the first tips that Khrushchev was being ousted in 1964 and he hinted, in print, that the Soviet Union might make a pre-emptive strike at the Chinese nuclear establishment.

But was the Louis contact with Time Inc. the key one? Some sources contend that the Khrushchev material had all come out of the Soviet Union by April, four months before the Copenhagen session.

Millions of Americans saw on NBC on July 11, 1967, a taped film interview with Khrushchev, made at his retirement house, and some of what he said then is repeated in the book in only slightly different words. Some say other material from parts of that interview not shown on TV also is in the book.

There has been speculation that Khrushchev's well-known son-in-law, Alexei Adzhubel, once editor of Izvestia but ousted when Khrushchev fell, did the taping for both film and book and somehow got it out to the West.

But Henry Shapiro, the longtime United Press International correspondent in Moscow, wrote on Jan. 1 from London where he was on holiday, that "the widespread conviction now is that the job was done by Lev Petrov, the husband of Khrushchev's granddaughter, Yulia." Petrov, who died in the summer of 1970, spoke English and, wrote Shapiro, "had frequent contact with English-speaking newsmen and diplomats." Schecter for some time was a Time-Life correspondent in Moscow but his relations, if any, with Petrov are not on the record.

It is known that Petrov died of cancer and that he had been told some time in advance that his illness was fatal. This has led to speculation that, as a dying man, he took the risk of smuggling out the Khrushchev material without, as Shapiro suggested,

the knowledge or consent of either Khrushchev or Soviet authorities.

Why? Shapiro wrote that Petrov was said to have been deeply resentful of the way the current Kremlin leadership had treated Khrushchev, that he had some misgivings about the cessation of the de-Stalinization process that Khrushchev had originated and that he wanted to correct the historic injustice to Khrushchev.

Thus some experts conclude that Petrov was the key man, having seen the opportunity indicated by the 1967 NBC interview, and that much, if not all, of the material in the book got to the West by his doing.

There is, perhaps, some substantiation to this thesis in the story of Dr. A. McGhee Harvey of the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Along with the Khrushchev excerpts, Life published Harvey's account of a meeting with Khrushchev at his retirement dacha outside Moscow in late 1969.

What Life did not report, however, is that when Harvey was about to leave the Soviet Union, he was subjected to most intensive search of his person and his baggage. This has led some to conclude that by then the KGB had discovered that Petrov had gotten tapes out of the country and the officials were trying to halt any further leaks.

Victor Louis' Role

THIS BRINGS us back to Victor Louis. He is said to have had a hand in the NBC film deal. Leonard Shapiro, a distinguished British expert on the Soviet Union, says the KGB "sponsored" that deal. Once the Khrushchev tapes were out, presumably through Petrov's doing, did the KGB get Louis into the act to mitigate the effect? Did he provide additional and less damaging material or only some new photographs for Life?

Unhappily, the CIA, which tries to keep track of fellows like Louis when they are abroad, apparently did not have that Copenhagen hotel room bugged. It did find out afterward that Time Inc. paid Louis' bills. It is also said that the CIA knows how at least some of the material got out of the Soviet Union but that Time Inc. has refused to provide any information to either the CIA or other government intelligence agencies that have inquired.

Most of the above assumes, as Time Inc. contends, that the material in "Khrushchev Remembers" is indeed authentic Khrushchev.

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